

PRESS ITEM FOR THE DCI

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DATE: 5 Oct
 ITEM: NO. 1
 REF: NO. _____

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War Crimes 250

WASHINGTON AP

— A House subcommittee is questioning U.S. involvement in a South Vietnamese program that has allegedly included torture, murder and inhumane treatment of South Vietnamese civilians.

The foreign operations and government information subcommittee says the Pentagon refused to investigate reports that Americans engaged in political assassinations and torture under the program.

The subcommittee prepared a report on the Vietnamese-run Phoenix program, for which the United States provides funds and advice. The subcommittee said more than 20,000 alleged Viet Cong informers were killed from 1968 to 1961 under the program.

It is "impossible not to wonder how many were the innocent victims of faulty intelligence," it said.

The report was scheduled to be considered by the House Government Operations Committee Tuesday, but a vote was cancelled because of lack of a quorum.

The report calls for the secretary of defense to "fully investigate these allegations of war crimes committed by U.S. military personnel in South Vietnam against civilians suspected of Viet Cong activities."

During hearings in July and August of 1971, the subcommittee was told by K. Barton Osborn, who said he served in military intelligence activities in South Vietnam, that he saw an American counterintelligence officer toss a Viet Cong suspect out of an airborne helicopter to try to make another suspect talk.

He also said torture and interrogation operations were carried out by "Americans only" with the knowledge of the South Vietnamese government.

Lt804aed Oct. 5

Comment: Thuermer, Maury and CSDO have copies.

These comments represent the initial and tentative reaction of the Office of Current Intelligence to the attached item from the news services.

Call to Probe Viet Killings Unheeded

United Press International

A House subcommittee has called on the Pentagon to investigate charges that U.S. servicemen routinely murdered South Vietnamese civilians suspected of Viet Cong activities, many of whom might have been innocent victims of faulty intelligence.

The subcommittee said in a classified report, obtained by United Press International yesterday, that the Defense Department knew of the charges involving a counter-terrorism program called Phoenix, but had failed to investigate.

The report said 20,587 persons suspected of being Viet Cong infrastructure members were killed under the program from the beginning of 1968 through May 1971, and "it is impossible not to wonder how many of those persons were the innocent victims of faulty intelligence."

The report by the foreign operations and government information subcommittee, based on almost two years of hearings and investigation in Vietnam, questioned the "serious moral considerations of U.S. support for a program that allegedly included torture, murder and inhumane treatment of South Vietnamese civilians."

However, the parent Government Operations Committee appeared ready to kill the report through inaction. A Sept. 17 meeting to consider the report was called off, and only a handful of members appeared yesterday, preventing a quorum.

Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich. charged a "complete double-cross" by both Republicans and Democrats to prevent the report from being approved.

"It would seem that here in the eighth year of the Vietnam war, we would want to get this thing out," Conyers said. But he added it was "clear that Congress wants to rationalize this whole damned thing."

Rep. William Moorhead, D-Pa., subcommittee chairman, promised another effort to get the report through the full committee next week.